

The Human Right To Housing: Using ATLAS.ti To Combine Qualitative And Quantitative Methods To Analyze Global Discourses

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Abstract

The paper is part of the author's PhD research considering the human right to housing. In this exploration, ATLAS.ti is utilized for a global discourse analysis of about 500 States Parties reports and 250 concluding observations of a human rights committee. The author differentiates between two forms of inadequate housing: homelessness and SPaces of Inadequate Housing (SPIH). The Primary Document Family Manager and the Query Tool aid to compare these inadequate housing forms and the responding policies of different states and UN regions. The focus of this paper lies on the description of the Auto Coding Dialog. The paper argues that the Auto Coding Dialog can facilitate dealing with a vast amount of data because it aids to separate the text segments relevant for housing. Additionally, the author illustrates how research findings that have been worked out with ATLAS.ti can be visualized through diffusion maps. These maps give an overview of the different contents of the human right to housing in a global perspective.

Keywords

Human Rights, housing, discourse analysis, land policy

ATLAS.ti And Global Discourses

Housing is a human right and presents a challenge for many policymakers. This paper is a portion of my PhD research under the working title 'land policy and the human right to housing'. My PhD is a global discourse analysis of the human right to housing and the different responding policies of many countries all over the world. In this vein, spatial solutions for different forms of inadequate housing are in the center of attention. The research is rooted in the research project FLOOR (Financial Assistance, Land Policy, and Global Social Rights, www.floorgroup.de). FLOOR examines global social policies and human rights and is separated into three subprojects: Ulrike Davy (Social Law, University of Bielefeld) and her research team from FLOOR A focus on social rights, in particular the rights to social security and social assistance (Article 9 ICESCR) and the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 11 ICESCR) (Buschmann, 2010, 2013; Davy, 2013). Lutz Leisering and his research team from FLOOR B (Social Policy, University of Bielefeld) explore the global diffusion of social cash transfers (financial assistance) as an instrument for social security (Leisering, 2009; Leisering & Barrientos, 2013). The present research is a portion of FLOOR C, socio-ecological land policy, investigated by Benjamin Davy (Spatial Planning, Technical University of Dortmund). FLOOR C examines spatial consequences of property (Davy, 2012), in particular by regarding the relationship between the poor and the land (Davy, 2009).

When considering housing as a human right, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is a must-read document. Housing is regarded as a cornerstone of the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 11 ICESCR). The ICESCR has an enormous potential for global discourse analysis because its implementation mechanism works in the form of a reporting procedure. Each

member state has to submit States Parties reports to a human rights organ, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter: the committee). The committee responds to these reports with concluding observations. During the last 30 years, countries from all regions of the world have submitted about 500 reports. Ulrike Davy from FLOOR A discovered the potential of these reports under ICESCR for examining social policies on a global level (Davy, 2013). With her research team, she collected the reports (and the concluding observations) and prepared them for analysis. The States Parties reports comprise the empirical heart of my research, too, and will be presented in the following section.

The basic aim of this paper is to explain how ATLAS.ti aids in the analysis of global discourses that contain a vast amount of data. With respect to my research subject, that means exploring the States Parties reports for a global comparative discussion. The analysis gives answers to many research questions considering the content of the human right to housing, the responding policies and the actors who face inadequate housing. In this paper, I will explain the theoretical background of my research design, the role of the relevant functions of ATLAS.ti, and how I transfer my research results into diffusion maps, generated with ESRI ArcGIS. First of all, I will explain the ICESCR and its reporting procedure.

Human Rights And Housing

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25, para. 1, UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 11, para. 1, ICESCR) consider housing as a cornerstone of the right to an adequate standard of living. The ICESCR was adopted in 1966 and came into force ten years later in 1976. The covenant is one of nine core international human rights treaties and seems to be less prominent than its 'big sister', the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The rights of the ICESCR and the rights of the ICCPR are different in nature, origin, and significance (Craven, 2002, p. 7). In opposition to civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights (hereafter: ESC rights) are often not considered as individuals' rights but rather as the state's obligations (Henkin, 1979). For a long time, ESC rights had the status of "second generation rights" (e.g., Buschmann, 2013, pp. 28–38; Dean, 2007, p. 2). The ICESCR is separated into five parts that, combined, contain 31 articles. Part III (Articles 6 to 15) can be regarded as "the heart of the covenant" (Craven, 2002, p. 22) because it consists of the ESC rights themselves: labour rights (Articles 6 to 8), the right to social security (Article 9), family rights (Article 10), the right to health (Article 12), the right to free education (Articles 13 and 14), the right to participation in culture (Article 15), and, significant for housing, the right to an adequate standard of living:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent. (Article 11, para. 1)

The system of supervision is described in part IV of the covenant (Article 16–25). It works in the form of a reporting procedure. Based on Article 16 ICESCR, the “States Parties [...] undertake to submit in conformity with this part of the Covenant reports on the measures which they have adopted and the progress made in achieving the observance of the rights recognized herein”.

In sum, the States Parties reports contain approximately 30,000 pages. There, the states describe their policies for ESC rights, gradually responding to each of the rights of Articles 6 to 15 ICESCR. The reports differ in their size depending on the year of submission and on the reporting country. Some reports contain 15 pages, others more than 250. The sections concerning Article 11 ICESCR are of essential significance for the present research because there the states describe *inter alia* their policies to reach adequate housing. In each State Party report, these sections have been read in detail and coded in a manner familiar to ATLAS.ti users.

Research Design

The vast amount of data and the complexity of the subject of housing require a research design that involves qualitative as well as quantitative elements. My approach is inspired by Keller's (2013) discourse research, Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis and the grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (2008). I will present the basic assumptions of the position and explain in only a few words in terms of how far they have influenced my research.

Reiner Keller is well known in the German discourse research because he gave a clear overview of different discourse relevant research positions and theories (Keller, 2013). Furthermore, he developed the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD, in German: Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse) (Keller, 2005, 2011, 2013, pp. 61–135). Keller's approach has its origin in Berger and Luckmann's (1967) sociology of knowledge theory and builds a bridge between culturalist approaches to discourse research and the discourse theories of Michel Foucault:

The Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse investigates [the] social practices and processes of communicative construction, stabilization and transformation of symbolic orders and their consequences: for example, laws, statistics, classifications, techniques, objects and practices are, in this sense, effects of discourses and the 'pre'-conditions for new discourses. (Keller, 2013, p. 61)

The author's argument is that sociology, with its methodological richness, allows for a broader underpinning of discourse research than is possible in approaches that have their roots in linguistics or discourse theory (Keller, 2013, p. 64). Close to Foucault, Keller (2013, p. 73) understood the term *dispositif* to mean the material and ideational infrastructure, for example, the laws, codes of behaviour, buildings, and measuring devices. In his understanding, a discourse analysis includes the detailed analysis of both the text and the *dispositif*. This also applies for to my PhD research. For the present discussion the investigation of text is at the centre of attention.

Philip Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis consists of a bundle of techniques for systematic textual analysis intended to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis for a more qualitative text interpretation. The proposal of inductive category development and deductive category application (Mayring, 2000) with definitions, examples and coding rules is a good guideline for generating categories and codes.

The grounded theory also offers different techniques for generating codes and is of significance for my research because it emphasizes that the theory (in the form of hypotheses and research questions) is not developed before but during the work with the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). Particularly in the beginning phase as well as during the moments of uncertainty this emphasis motivates to go on with the coding, even if the 'perfect' research question or hypothesis has not yet been found.

Filtering The Data With The Auto Coding Dialog

Keller (2005, 2011, 2013), Mayring (2000), and Glaser and Strauss (2008) emphasized the strength of qualitative research approaches. At the same time, their respective works admitted that often quantitative and qualitative elements must be combined with each other. This also applies to the present research.

The first challenge at the beginning of my research was to deal with the vast amount of text. In the States Parties reports, the countries reported on housing in the sections that relate to Article 11 ICESCR. However, from time to time, some states also reported on housing policies indirectly outside of these sections, for example when they talked about street children by reporting family rights (Article 10 ICESCR) or when they described health measures (Article 12 ICESCR) for slum dwellers. Obviously, such information is essential for my research question, and I had to find and code these segments in each of the States Parties reports. Due to the large amount of data material it was not possible to read all text outside of the sections concerning Article 11 ICESCR in detail. A strategy was necessary that achieved two goals: not to overlook the text segments relevant to housing and, at the same time, not to lose too much time with reading largely irrelevant sections. The Auto Coding Tool achieved both goals. In the following, I will describe the procedure of filtering the data step by step.

The first step for a successful text analysis is certainly reading. So first, I read the sections concerning Article 11 ICESCR in each of the States Parties reports. By doing this, I developed my codes as described in the next section (see below). Simultaneously, I generated a keywords list with more than one hundred terms that relate to housing. This list contains terms that are directly connected with housing like *housing*|*homeless*|*slum*|*eviction*|*settlement*|*tenant*|. Moreover, the lists contains terms that sometimes relate to housing like |*street*|*informal*|*refugee*|*legaliz*| *shortage*|*property*|.

In a next step, I started the Auto Coding Dialog. This tool "combines the Text Search tool with an automatic segmentation and code assignment mechanism" (Friese, 2013, p. 218). I generated a code with the name '***'. The *Scope of Search* was the selected PD and the *Segment Size* was Word.

Then, in the next step, I entered all the words of the keyword list into the search field and started auto coding. Friese (2013, p. 220) mentioned the risk of finding a potentially large number of inadequate quotations. Due to the large number of words in my keywords list, this is exactly what happened. The Auto Coding tool found, depending on the size of the PD (=State Party report), up to 1.000 quotations in one single PD. Most of them were, as expected, inside the Article 11 ICESCR sections. I did not have to check those quotations because those sections had been coded before (see, first step: Reading). I was interested in the quotations of the code '****' that the tool found *outside* of the Article 11 ICESCR sections. I checked every one of the quotations. Often they were not related to housing. One example: The word *informal* was one of the terms in my keyword list. In most cases, when the automatically found quotation *informal* came up, the countries reported on informal work or informal education rather than informal housing. Hence, a '****' quotation only sometimes led me to significant text segments for my housing research. In these cases, I read the text segment in detail and coded it like I did in the Article 11 ICESCR sections.

After having checked all automatically generated quotations coded with '****', I deleted the '****' code and started the Auto Coding Dialog for the next PD.

Accordingly, the keywords list entered into the Auto Coding Dialog had the function of a safety net that helped not to overlook text segments relevant to housing. At the end of this process, this safety net had helped to identify all relevant housing text segments outside of the sections concerning Article 11 ICESCR in all States Parties reports and the committee's concluding observations.

Developing The Main Category: Forms And Aspects Of Inadequate Housing

Housing is closely linked to many other needs and rights and one of the most prominent of the ESC rights (Craven, 2002, p. 329). In the beginning of the research, one challenge was to develop the main category of inadequate housing, including its different codes and sub-codes. Although the States Parties reports are at the centre of attention for the present research, I developed the category of inadequate housing and its underlying codes including the coding rules by combining inductive and deductive steps. I developed the category inductively based on the sections concerning Article 11 ICESCR in the States Parties reports and used open coding. The deductive category development was based on official documents of the committee, the UN Habitat, and scholarly literature about (inadequate) housing.

In a general comment considering the right to housing, the committee suggested viewing housing as "the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity" (CESCR, 1991, para. 7) and elaborated that housing adequacy depends on social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological, and other factors (CESCR, 1991, para. 8). The committee identified seven basic aspects that have to be taken into account. Table 1 illustrates the aspects including a short summarization of the committee's explanations. The committee's

aspect list has been repeated, substantiated, shortened, modified, and commentated in many other sources (e.g., Craven, 2002, pp. 335–347; Nevins, 2010, pp. 19–20; UN Habitat, 2009).

Aspect	Description
Legal security of tenure	Tenure takes a variety of forms. All persons should be protected against forced evictions, harassments and other threats.
Availability of services, materials facilities and infrastructure	An adequate house must contain facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition. Access to natural and common resources: safe drinking water, energy, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.
Affordability	The percentage of housing cost should be commensurate with income levels.
Habitability	Inhabitants must be protected from bad weather effects and other threats to health.
Accessibility	Disadvantaged groups must be accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing, and their special needs should be taken into account.
Location	Access to employment options, health care services, schools, child care centres and other facilities. Housing should not be built on polluted sites.
Cultural adequacy	Modernization should not sacrifice cultural dimensions of housing.

Table 1: Aspects of adequate housing. - Adapted from CESCR, 1991, para. 8, shortened

The UN Habitat (2009, p. 4) emphasized that the housing situation is inadequate when at least one of these aspects is violated.

Homelessness is my first main code of inadequate housing because it violates almost every one of the mentioned aspects. From the perspective of law, a homeless person has many rights on different levels, including the mentioned ICESCR and many other international covenants and conventions (Leckie, 2001, pp. 151–153; Nevins, 2010, pp. 84–87; UN Habitat, 2009, p. 11), and the national law. Homelessness is a violation not only of the human right to housing but a violation of many other human rights (Lynch & Cole, 2003). Scholars frequently claim that rights often only protect people “more in theory than in practice” (Frazer and Marlier, 2009, p. 4). Human rights seem far away when we consider a homeless woman begging in front of a railway station. The existence of housing rights does not automatically mean that states have the obligation to eliminate homelessness immediately (Craven, 2002, p. 330). Many homeless people live and sleep in urban areas that are often near or at places of high economic value. Thus, urban homelessness often stands for the (spatial) proximity of extreme poverty and wealth.

My second main code summarizes different forms of inadequate housing such as slums, informal settlements, illegal settlements, shanty settlements, irregular settlements, pirate settlements, unauthorized communities, emergency shelters, refugee camps, night shelters. Some countries have their own terms, like *barrio* (Spanish), *bidonville* (French), *favela* (Portuguese), *gececondu* (Turkish), *Elendsviertel* (German), *trushchobi* (Russian) or *hood* and *ghetto* (American English) (UN Habitat, 2003, pp. 9–10). For simplification, my term to capture these inadequate housing forms is SPIH: Spaces of Inadequate Hous-

ing (Kolocek, 2012, 2013). SPIH also violate many of the listed aspects. The key difference between homelessness and SPIH enters the discussion when arguing from a spatial perspective. Slums, informal settlements or emergency shelters are spaces (!) where people live; homeless people are people (!) who need space for living. A simple test helps to understand this difference: the reader might try to see in his or her mind's eye a picture of homelessness – without a homeless person. He or she will have some difficulties. Now, one can try to imagine a picture that illustrates a slum–without a slum dweller. That probably works (better). This difference is of essential significance from the perspective of land policy, particularly when talking about solutions for inadequate housing. Homeless people are, even though they occupy spaces of high economic value, often regarded as helpless victims without any economic potential. On the other hand, people living in informal settlements (mostly in the Global South) are often viewed as entrepreneurs with lots of hidden assets and talents, in other words: as dead capital that has to be woken up (de Soto, 2000). To observe this key difference in more detail is one of the key challenges of my dissertation.

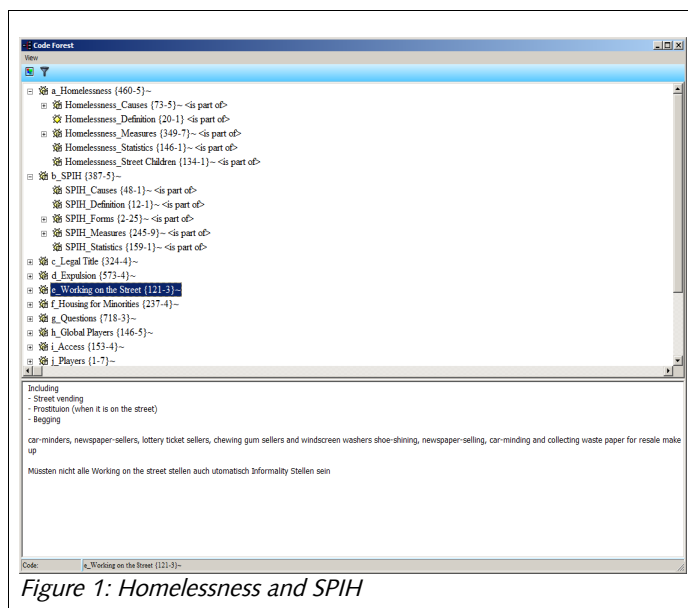


Figure 1: Homelessness and SPIH

As Figure 1 illustrates, both main codes homelessness and SPIH include the sub-codes *statistics*, *definition*, *causes* and *measures* which are, inter alia, divided into sub-codes. The sub-codes are necessary to evaluate the differences between homelessness and SPIH in the States Parties reports. Particularly the analysis of the sub-codes *Homelessness_Measures* or *SPIH_Measures* gives detailed information considering the different housing policies of the countries. The category inadequate housing consists of further codes (that are not illustrated in

figure 1), for example *eviction*, *expropriation*, or *actors*. Scholars of both housing and social policy are highly interested in 'the stakeholder question', because the varying qualitatively different arrangement between actor groups such as the state, the market and the family is an essential indicator to judge types of welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 2011).

Data Analysis

Grouping Documents

The Primary Document Family Manager was necessary to prepare the analysis of the reports with the Query Tool. The countries differ in the number of reports they submitted to the committee, the point in time they submitted their first report, and the size of their reports. Some countries submitted only one State Party report, others submitted five. In my global and regional comparative discussion, I do not compare the different States Parties reports of individual countries with each other. A country that submitted five States Parties reports, the first one in 1981 and the fifth one in 2007, is treated in the same way as a country that ratified the ICESCR in 1994 and has only submitted one report so far. Figure 2 illustrates the reporting status of the ICESCR member states.

ICESCR Member States: Reporting status

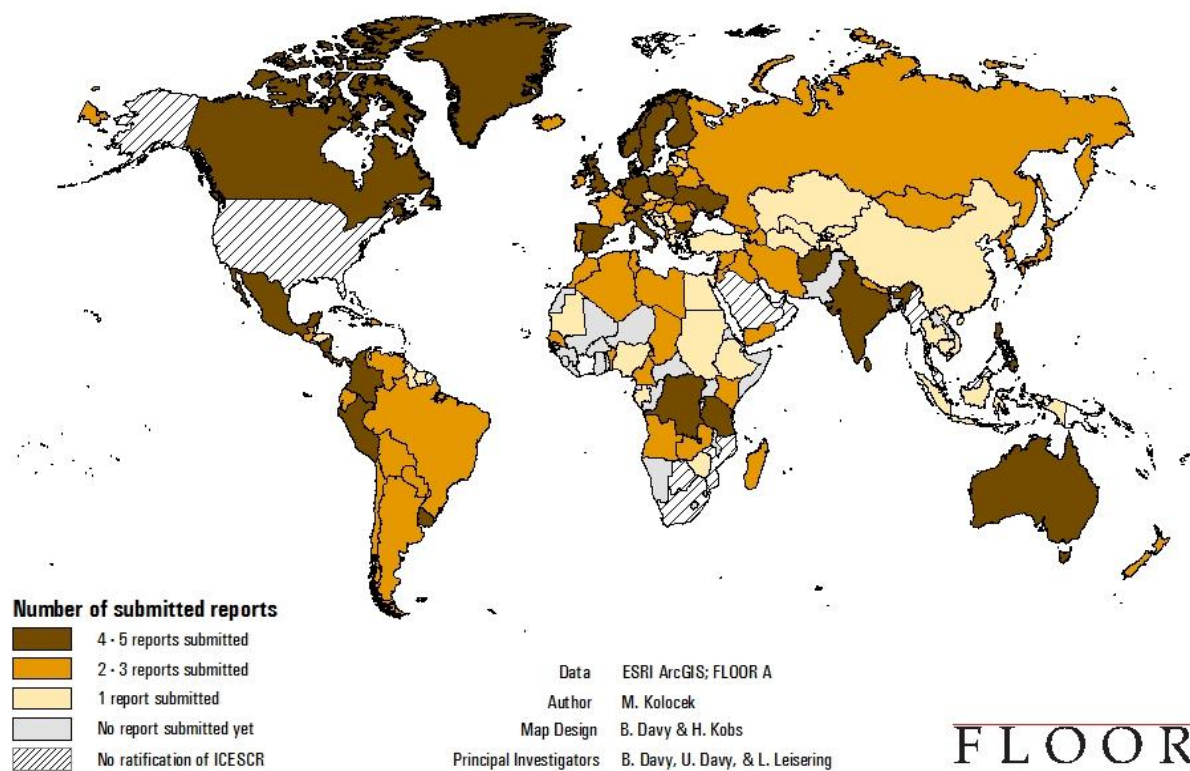


Figure 2: Diffusion map concerning the reporting status

The United States and South Africa are the most prominent countries not to have ratified the ICESCR yet. Some countries, particularly African countries, have ratified the covenant only a few years ago and have not yet submitted their first report. With the Primary Document Family Manager, I created a Family for each country that has submitted at least one report. Furthermore, I created six Super Families for each UN region (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania, and Northern America) and one for the European Union. Before I will start with the global comparative discussion of my results I

tried out my codes for example by comparing States Parties reports of Latin American and African countries with each other (Kolocek, 2012) or by discussing the homelessness policies of the EU member states (Kolocek, 2013).

The Query Tool

The Query Tool is utilized for at least two forms of comparisons. First, it helps to compare both main codes homelessness and SPaces of Inadequate Housing (SPIH) with each other. This is of particular interest when differentiating the broad research question “How do the countries talk about both forms of inadequate housing?” into detailed questions that are answered with my sub-codes, for example:

Do the countries focus on *statistical information* or do they talk about *causes*, or *measures* for homelessness/SPIH, or do they bring up all these aspects? What (kind of) measures do they suggest for homelessness; what (kind of) measures do they suggest for SPIH? What (global and non global) actors are reported when the countries describe their policies for SPIH/homelessness?

In the ICESCR States Parties reports of the EU member states, for instance, homelessness was often regarded as a task for NGOs and not for market actors while, on the other hand, SPIH were viewed more frequently as a challenge for governmental and market actors (Kolocek, 2013, p. 148).

Secondly, the Query Tool helps to compare different states and UN regions with each other. African countries, for instance, reported on street children more frequently when they talked about homelessness than Latin American countries (Kolocek, 2012, p. 21). This is a typical finding that could not have been worked out without the Auto Coding Dialog, because many of the text segments where African countries reported homelessness (in the form of street children) were outside of the Article 11 sections.

Diffusion Maps

Benjamin Davy, principal investigator of FLOOR C, invented diffusion maps, an idea I am drawing upon in my research. In this section, I want to explain: what is the idea of diffusion maps and how does the process of generating diffusion maps work? The diffusion maps are a result of the cooperation between the subprojects FLOOR A and FLOOR C. The starting point is a Microsoft Excel file that Ulrike Davy and her research team from FLOOR A have generated. In this Excel file one line is allocated for each country of the world. The columns were filled with lots of information, for example, the year of ratification for ICESCR or other international covenants, the number of submitted reports, or the Human Development Index (HDI). After the coding process of each State Party report, I started to fill the next columns. There, I recorded my research results examined with the main codes homelessness and SPIH and their underlying sub-codes. Some columns were utilized for a simple yes or no query. One example: I inserted a “1” in a field if a country mentioned the sub-code *Homelessness_Measures_Prevention* in at least one of its reports and a “0” if the country did not. By doing this for each country, I obtained (quantitative) information concerning the number of countries that reported prevention of homelessness. The Excel file

is the basis for the diffusion maps that were generated with ESRI ArcGIS. I joined the Excel file into an ESRI ArcMap document and achieved an overview of the countries and regions where, for instance, prevention of homelessness was mentioned in the reports. Other columns were filled with numbers from 0 to 4 to express the results of a qualitative interpretation of the States Parties reports, for example by observing how intensively the countries reported homelessness (0 = The country does not mention the topic, 4 = The country reports in detail).

EU Member States: Reporting Homelessness

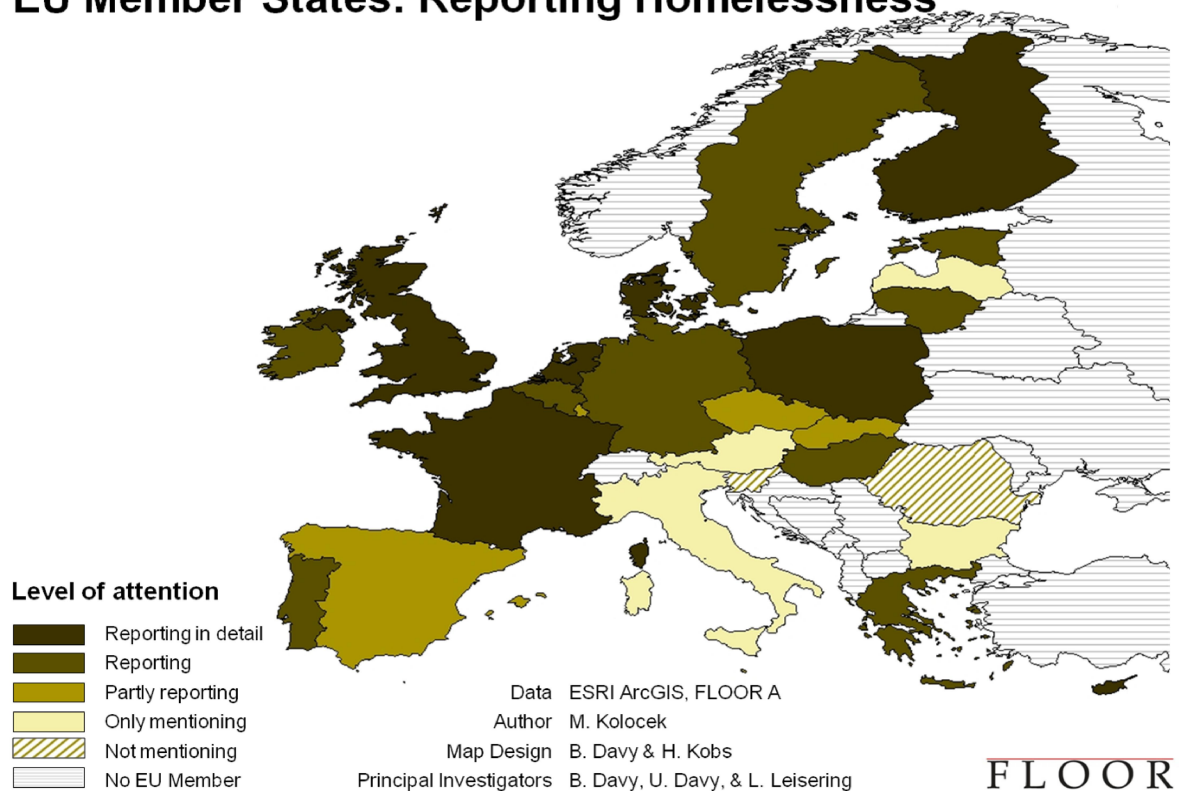


Figure 3: Diffusion map concerning the level of attention given to reporting homelessness. See also Kolocek, 2013, p. 145.

Figure 3 illustrates that some European countries reported homelessness in detail, others only mentioned the subjects in a few words and two countries did not mention the topic at all in their reports. The diffusion maps are often a starting point for a comparative discussion because they can illustrate regional trends that are difficult to identify by regarding an Excel or an ATLAS.ti file, particularly when starting the comparative discussion on a global level.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate that ATLAS.ti assists to analyse global discourses that contain a vast amount of data. The paper has shown that, for my research, the strength of ATLAS.ti is that the software helps not to lose orientation. ATLAS.ti can be useful under some circumstances by saving time

because it may allow the researcher to circumvent the long process of reading irrelevant text segments. Other scholars are sometimes surprised when I tell them that ATLAS.ti helps me to avoid reading. My research design is then automatically regarded as a quantitative approach of text analysis. This is, however, not true. The keywords list entered into the Auto Coding Dialog works as a safety net that helps me not to overlook text segments that answer my research questions regarding housing. The identified segments are then analysed through a qualitative text interpretation in a way familiar to ATLAS.ti users. During the comparative discussion of the research results, answering simple quantitative questions like “what and how many countries do mention the sub-code XY” are often the starting point of generating new research questions and hypotheses. Furthermore, the number of reported sub-codes – for example, the number of different measures to combat homelessness – is an important indicator for the qualitative valuation of the countries’ attention to homelessness or SPIH.

The diffusion maps, which are generated with ESRI ArcGIS and based on an analysis with the Primary Family Doc Manager and the Query Tool, can illustrate quantitative as well as qualitative research results. They give the reader an overview of the different contents of the human right to housing all over the world. Additionally, the maps help the researcher not to lose orientation during the comparative discussion.

ATLAS.ti is a suitable software for combining quantitative and qualitative research steps for the analysis of global discourses that contain a vast amount of data. Nonetheless, the researcher has to work attentively and carefully – as with any other research approach that leaves room for error.

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Article Information

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